

OUTDOORS, INC.

A CASE STUDY FROM THE SOUTH

Outdoors, Inc. is a specialty outdoor retailer providing outdoor enthusiasts in Memphis and the mid-south with quality outdoor apparel and gear. Outdoors, Inc. first opened its doors 31 years ago and has since grown into a thriving business that caters to the outdoor recreation community through its four retail stores and one outlet. The owners are committed to ensuring that all of their clients, whether male or female, have a positive experience in their stores. Their mission is to provide their customers with high quality equipment and apparel to enhance their outdoor activities while promoting long term relationships with their customers by offering impeccable service beyond their expectations.

FILLING THE GENDER GAP

Outdoors, Inc. began primarily as a men's focused retailer. The lack of women's specific products at the time severely limited the store's ability to sell to this market. It wasn't until the mid 90's that the industry caught on and began increasing its production of merchandise designed specifically for women. Outdoors, Inc. capitalized on this opportunity by enhancing its service to this previously underserved market. By carrying more women's apparel from brands like Patagonia, The North Face and Mountain Hardwear, Outdoors, Inc. began to see growth in this area and over the course of a few years, developed a flourishing and loyal female following.

THE OUTDOORS, INC. WOMAN

When Outdoors, Inc. first started carrying women's specific products their average female customer was between the ages of 18 and 30, single and a college graduate. The women patronizing the store at this time were part of a new wave of health conscious Americans, looking for healthier lifestyles through better nutrition and increased activity. Outdoors, Inc. understood that these women were looking beyond department stores for higher quality, more technical apparel. They embraced this trend among young women by offering a variety of performance outdoor equipment and apparel designed specifically for women. Today they cater to women from a wide range of ages and lifestyles. Additionally, they carry outdoor gear for children as young as two and serve women well into their 40's and 50's. They also have a growing pre-teen and teen business which they foster by carrying hip brands that youth identify with like The North Face and Water Girl.

CLINICS BUILD TRUST AND LOYALTY

Outdoors, Inc. began offering women's specific clinics to help drive new participants into their stores and to demonstrate their commitment to serving their female clientele. They focused their women's clinics on activities like cycling, kayaking and climbing and made a concerted effort to provide a non-threatening environment to draw out tenuous, first-time participants. Outdoors, Inc. developed a partnership with the Junior League of Memphis and hosted a number of clinics in conjunction with this well known and trusted organization. These clinics significantly boosted their women's business and helped secure the loyal following that patronizes their business to this day.



At present, Outdoors, Inc. hosts non-gender specific clinics—but does foresee hosting more women’s clinics in the future as needs and interests arise. For now, they’ve found that their loyal female following is happy to attend these clinics, with kayaking currently drawing the greatest number of female participants.

Outdoors, Inc. has found that women are looking for comfy clothes to put on after hiking, biking, or participating in other outdoor activities.

WHAT’S HOT IN TENNESSEE

Lifestyle clothing is driving retail sales in Tennessee as well as the rest of the nation. Sales in Yoga and Pilates apparel and equipment are strong and steady and have become a staple in Outdoors, Inc.’s women’s department. They’ve found that women are looking for comfy clothes to put on after hiking, biking, or participating in other outdoor activities. The store cites trail-running, walking, hiking and sea-kayaking as the most popular outdoor activities among women in their area. They’ve also noticed a resurgence in cycling in their community - more road than mountain biking. Sales in backpacking equipment have fallen off, indicating that women are more often than not participating in “done in a day” activities. Outdoors, Inc. does a significant amount of business in the winter around snowsports. 100% of their clients buying snowsports equipment and apparel are venturing out West to ski and ride.

ONLY AS GOOD AS YOUR SALES STAFF

Part of Outdoors, Inc.’s mission is to provide a workplace for employees that encourages honesty, fairness, respect for others, compassion and integrity. Training is fundamental at Outdoors, Inc. New staff work side by side with veteran staff until they feel comfortable and well versed in the store’s merchandise. The store managers recognize that they are only as good as their sales staff. They invest in staff training to ensure that each employee feels competent and knowledgeable about their products. They want each and every client to have the very best experience and to eagerly return. Outdoors, Inc. looks for employees that have a strong retail background and recruits from traditional women’s retail stores like The Gap, Banana Republic and Ann Taylor. Outdoors, Inc. employs a mix of male and female staff and trains their staff to proficiently sell all of their products regardless of gender. Two of their four retail stores are currently managed by women.

OUTDOORS, INC. IN THE COMMUNITY

Outdoors, Inc. is committed to serving the community through events that encourage respect and care for the environment and improve quality of life. They sponsor several local minority athletic groups like an African American ski team and bike club. Outdoors, Inc. provides these groups with meeting space, discounts on merchandise and fashion shows specific to their sports. The store will also be sponsoring its 24th Annual Canoe and Kayak Race which draws individuals from all over the country including Olympic athletes. Outdoors, Inc. offers race opportunities for paddlers of all experience levels, from beginners to experts and for both men and women. Outdoors, Inc. also sponsors local fly-fishing and trail-running events for their clients that attract large numbers of women.



Courtesy of:



Outdoors, Inc. • 610-B National Avenue • Memphis, TN 38122 • 901.324.2506 • www.outdoorsinc.com